

And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing.

While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

*Gwendolen. [Reproachfully.]* Mamma!

*Lady Bracknell.* In the carriage, Gwendolen!

*[Gwendolen goes to the door. She and Jack blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back. Lady Bracknell looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.]* Gwendolen, the carriage!

*Gwendolen.* Yes, mamma. *[Goes out, looking back at Jack.]*

*Lady Bracknell. [Sitting down.]* You can take a seat, Mr.

Worthing. *[Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.]*

*Jack.* Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

*Lady Bracknell. [Pencil and note-book in hand.]* I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

*Jack.* Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

*Lady Bracknell.* I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

*Jack.* Twenty-nine.

*Lady Bracknell.* A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

*Jack. [After some hesitation]* I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

*Jack.* Between seven and eight thousand a year.

*Lady Bracknell. [Makes a note in her book]* In land, or in investments?

*Jack.* In investments, chiefly.

*Lady Bracknell.* That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime and the duties